



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

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Thank you for your email dated 10 April 2019 regarding the new changes to abortion law in Northern Ireland and the duty under section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 (NIEF Act), including access to abortion services in the current Covid-19 crisis.

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

In relation to access to services during Covid-19, the temporary approval power made for England for both pills to be taken at home for early medical abortions could not extend to Northern Ireland. The Regulations provide an approval power for the Northern Ireland Department of Health to be able to approve the provision of abortion services in places other than those listed in the regulations. This includes being able to respond to Covid-19 circumstances as necessary.

We appreciate that Covid-19 has created significant difficulties for ongoing access to services in England for women and girls from Northern Ireland. We are continuing close engagement with the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, who are contracted to provide the booking services for women travelling to England to access abortion services, and keeping the matter under close review.

In the meantime I am pleased that an interim solution has been reached for some service provision on the ground in Northern Ireland to have commenced through existing sexual and reproductive health services in the Belfast, Northern and Western Trust areas during this uncertain time. To facilitate this, Informing Choices Northern Ireland is acting as the Central Access Point in order to provide a local pathway to this local abortion care. The Central Booking Service in England can also continue to be contacted for support and advice on options available at present.

I have written to the relevant Northern Ireland ministers, to ensure the implementation of all of the recommendations under paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW Report. We will continue to work closely with the Department of Health, and other relevant Northern Ireland departments, in continuing to progress this work.

If you would like to discuss these matters further, the Minister of State, Robin Walker MP, would be happy to organise a meeting, following on from your earlier discussions on the Regulations.

Yours sincerely

**RT HON BRANDON LEWIS CBE MP**  
**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**